

Motivating Employees to Change Old Habits

Waste reduction hinges on the participation and support of employees, managers, and customers. It involves rethinking the way we do things and changing old habits. This is not easy, but rewards abound as resources and money are saved. Below is advice from experts who have firsthand experience motivating people.

Changing old habits and forming new ones is an ongoing process that begins with exposure to—and assimilation of—pertinent information. An individual uses information to create a perception of the relative costs and benefits of adopting a new behavior. If a new practice isn't reinforced by an ongoing perception that benefits outweigh costs, the change will likely be temporary.

To successfully change old habits takes, time, patience, and persistence. Here are some ideas that other businesses have used to educate and motivate employees to reduce waste.

Creative Images

- In our information age where we are bombarded with all kinds of information, it is important to make your message stand out. The right visual impressions can actually be stronger than words.
- Use a catchy logo and slogan for your program.
- Create pictures and graphics to jazz up written materials, recycling containers, and coffee mugs.
- Show people how much waste they generate using photos, videos, or displays.
- Present a short video to employees.

- CIWMB clip art and posters are available online for ideas or downloading at:
www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Bizwaste/Posters/
(posters)
www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Gallery/Wasteprev/
(clip art)

Motivating Messages

Facts should be put in terms people can relate to and the message should be easy to understand. A startling fact can help motivate a person to seek change.

- Explain why it is important to stop wasting resources. Where possible, show the benefits of cost savings, resources saved, customer satisfaction, and corporate and personal responsibility towards future generations.
- Present information so it stands out; avoid being redundant or boring.
- Use startling facts.
- Personalize information and relate it to what a person already knows.
- Don't assume employees and managers are very familiar with key waste reduction words or concepts.
- Avoid giving too much information at once; give information in manageable pieces.

Person-to-Person Communication

- In addition to distributing or posting written educational materials, where feasible, conduct person-to-person education. This is more influential than written materials alone.
- Seek volunteers in each work area who are willing to be trained as “waste reduction pros.” The pros provide a friendly and knowledgeable source of information

throughout the organization. And they can provide feedback on how you are doing.

- Train new employees. Let them know they are expected to use resources carefully and fully participate in waste reduction programs. Explain how to prevent waste and recycle materials.
- Use all-employee gatherings to promote waste reduction. Show what is being done well and what areas need improvement.

Incentives

There are lots of great ways to motivate employees. Here are just a few:

- Graph progress and show people how they are doing by division, floor, or other unit.
- Create a contest and award prizes or trophies (reused, of course).
- Financially reward employees for ideas that generate significant cost savings and waste reduction.
- Offer discounts to employees who purchase coffee using their own washable mug.
- Recognize employee's waste reduction efforts in front of others.

Involve Employees

Employees know best how operations work and are critical to the success of any program.

- Solicit ideas from employees and involve them so they have ownership in the program.
- Let employees be part of the decision-making process; invite employees to participate in a waste reduction team that is responsible for implementing waste reduction practices.
- Ask employees to make a waste reduction pledge.

Set a Good Example

To help make new practices mainstream be sure to practice what you preach.

- Don't give away premiums or materials that will end up in the trash.
- Distribute information in the least wasteful way. Send messages electronically, if that option is available. Route messages or post them on a central bulletin board. Print or copy using both sides of the page, and format documents so there isn't excessive white space.
- Ask employees to bring their own plate or mug to gatherings where food and beverages will be served.

For More Resources:

- Visit Waste Prevention World, www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPW/.

CIWMB publications are available online at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/ or by calling (916) 341-6306. If you have questions, information, ideas, educational materials, etc., please e-mail us at bzassist@ciwmb.ca.gov.

The energy challenge facing California is real. Every Californian needs to take immediate action to reduce energy consumption. For a list of simple ways you can reduce demand and cut energy costs, **Flex Your Power** and visit www.consumerenergycenter.org/flex/index.html.